

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Introduction

The Wichita Bicycle Master Plan (Plan) is a guide for the development and implementation of bicycle projects and programs in the City of Wichita (City). It was developed with input from more than 2000 individuals who completed surveys, served on committees, volunteered for community events and attended open house events. The Plan includes goals, objectives, actions, priorities and performance measures along with a Priority Bikeway Network map with 123 miles of recommended new bicycle facilities.

Community Needs

Multiple citizen surveys have shown a desire for bicycle infrastructure improvements in Wichita. The most recent was the 2010 National Citizen Survey which compared the satisfaction of Wichita residents to the satisfaction of citizens in other similar cities. The 2010 edition reports that the satisfaction of Wichita residents with the ease of bicycle travel in the city was “much below” the satisfaction of residents in comparable cities. Wichita ranked 21 out of 29 comparable cities for the ease of bicycle travel in the 2010 National Citizen Survey. It was one of the three least positive ratings by the citizens of Wichita.

In response to growing demands for more bicycle facilities, Wichita-Sedgwick County ~~pursued and~~ secured ~~a grant~~ funding through the Department of Energy to develop the Wichita Bicycle Master Plan. The intent of the Plan was to help address the community desire for more bicycle infrastructure improvements by developing community goals, objectives, prioritized actions and implementation strategies. The boundaries of the Plan encompass the City of Wichita and the Wichita 2030 Urban Growth Area as identified in the Wichita and Small Cities 2030 Urban Growth Areas map, an element of the Wichita-Sedgwick County Comprehensive Plan.

In preparation for the Plan initiative, a working group of City staff and community stakeholders identified the following questions as important Wichita planning issues.

- Do bicycles belong on streets with automobiles or off the roadways?
- How can the safety of cyclists in Wichita be improved?
- How should bicycle transportation infrastructure be designed?
- What are the guiding principles that help determine when bicycle facilities are appropriate?
- Where should bicycle travel infrastructure be provided, and what type should it be?
- What are the top priority bicycle travel infrastructure needs?
- What are the top priority non-infrastructure needs?
- Are policy changes needed, and how should they be addressed?

- Do the proposed facilities address primarily recreational or transportation needs?
- How can existing facilities be combined to create a seamless network of bicycle travel options?
- Should currently planned bicycle facilities continue to be recommended?
- How will regional bicycle travel infrastructure continue through Wichita?
- How should bicycle infrastructure be maintained?
- What metrics do we use to measure success?
- How will the recommendations (infrastructure and non-infrastructure) be implemented?

Existing Facilities

In the 1980s through the present, the City of Wichita focused on securing rights-of-way and constructing paths. They have become extremely popular among residents and visitors to the City. New ~~trails-paths~~ offered opportunities for people to become more comfortable riding a bicycle for utilitarian and recreation trips. However, it soon became clear that improvements would also be needed ~~to the roadway system~~ in order to link paths and connect bicyclists directly to their destinations.

More recently, the City ~~realized that more focus and attention was needed on~~ has explored the use of on-street bicycle facilities by developing both the Mt. Vernon Rd. and 1st St and 2nd St bike lanes. ~~Th~~developing the on-road network of bicycle facilities to complement the path network. This Plan is a direct result of the need to improve bicycle access on Wichita's roadway system. As of 2012, Wichita has 54 miles of exiting bike paths and nine miles of existing bike lanes. This Plan is a direct result of the expressed desire of Wichita residents to improve conditions for getting around Wichita on a bicycle, and to determine if on-street bicycle facilities should utilized to improve bicycle access on Wichita's roadway system.

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Timeline

This Plan was developed in three phases:

1. Data Collection (July 2011 – November 2011). Included in the data collection were public input, coordinating with City staff and reviewing previous plans for bicycle facilities. It also included extensive field analysis of Wichita's existing transportation network to determine locations where bicycle facilities can be integrated into the existing street network. Over 800 miles of roadways were analyzed.
2. Draft Plan (November 2011 – June 2012). The draft Plan was developed with input from the project Steering Committee, City Staff and citizens who attended the two public open house events. The plan goals, objectives, actions, priorities and performance measures reflect community preferences.
3. Final Draft and Plan Adoption (July 2012 ~~–??? 2012.~~) The Plan was **adopted**

Investment

The level of investment that will be required in order to implement this Plan is modest in comparison to other transportation facilities. The estimated cost to implement the on-~~road-street~~ elements (including side paths) of the 123 mile Priority Bikeway Network is ~~6.76 million dollars.~~ The on-street facilities Plan cost includes approximately 25 miles of bicycle lanes, 37.7 miles of shared lane markings, and 58 miles of bicycle boulevards. The estimated cost to implement the on-street facilities is 2.25 million dollars, and would develop 4.5 miles of shared use paths. Paths, which are inherently more expensive, are not included in this estimate. The Plan identifies three priority path projects at an additional cost of approximately ____.

Plan Updates

This Plan is a living document and updates will be necessary in the future to assess progress, take advantage of emerging opportunities and re-evaluate priorities as needed. As the bicycle facility network is developed and new technologies are adopted, bicycling mode share will likely increase and travel patterns will change. Priorities will shift and new opportunities will become apparent. These changes will be reflected in yearly updates to the list of priority projects and the Bikeway Network maps. The Plan recommends that Updates-updates to the full Wichita Bicycle Master Plan ~~will~~ occur every five years.

